

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-18, 27-34 and 41-47 were previously pending in this application. Claims 19-24 and 35-40 have been previously withdrawn. Claims 3-5, 11, 14-18, 26-34, 42, 43, 45 and 46 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 6-8, 10, 12, 13 and 25 have been amended herein. New claims 48-56 are added herein. Applicants submit that no new matter has been entered by way of this amendment. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indication that claim 41 has been allowed.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

1. Claims 1, 3-18, 25, 27-34 and 42-47 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by Clitheros, et al. US Patent No. 4,564,410. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentably distinct from the cited reference.

Amended independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*:

An apparatus for processing a portion...

the portion including a concave portion which extends along a curved line in a substantially longitudinal direction of the automobile body and has opposing side walls and a bottom...

wherein the slidably supported structure is free to move in a widthwise direction of the automobile body relative to the automobile body, and

a longitudinal drive device for moving the slidably supported structure relative to the automobile body in a longitudinal direction of the automobile body....

Applicants submit that the Clitheros, et al. patent does not teach or suggest the elements recited in amended independent claim 1. Instead, in Clitheros, et al., a support block 28, to which nozzle 16 is mounted, is not free to slidably move in a widthwise direction or any other direction. Moreover, Clitheros, et al. disclose a guide rail 32 of the support block 28 that is threaded to engage the threaded portion of the support block 28. (See, Clitheros, et al., col. 4, lines 53-55). Accordingly, Clitheros, et al. disclose that the support block 28 will not move unless the guide rail 32 is rotatably driven.

In contrast to Clitheros, et al., amended independent claim 1 recites, the processing head, as well as, the slidably supported structure is free to move in the widthwise direction to follow the changing contour of the concave portion through engagement of the tip of the processing head with either of the opposing walls of the concave portion when the processing head moves in the longitudinal direction. Accordingly, the processing head can reliably process the portion of the automobile body (workpiece), while the processing apparatus has a simple construction.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that implementing the processing head, as well as the slidably supported structure free to move in the widthwise direction, as recited in amended claim 1, is not anticipated by Clitheros, et al., which disclose a nozzle 16 mounted to support block 28 that is not free to move in a widthwise direction. For at least this reason, Applicants submit that amended independent claim 1 is patentably distinct from Clitheros, et al. Similarly, Applicants submit that amended independent claim 25 is patentably distinct from Clitheros, et al. for at least a similar reason. Furthermore, Applicants submit that claims 6-10, 12, 13, 44 and 47, which are directly or indirectly

dependent on amended independent claims 1 or 25, respectively, as well as new claims 48-56 are patentably distinct from Clitheros, et al. for at least a similar reason. Therefore, Applicants request withdrawal of this ground of rejections.

2. Claims 48-56 are newly presented. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 48-56 are allowable over the prior art of record for at least the reasons stated above.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims and allowance of this application.

Respectfully submitted,
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